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DE RUEHML #1054 1372256

ZNR UUUUU ZZH
O 172256Z MAY 09
FM AMEMBASSY MANILA
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 4130
INFO RHHMUNA/USPACOM HONOLULU HI IMMEDIATE
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC IMMEDIATE
RUEHZS/ASSOCIATION OF SOUTHEAST ASIAN NATIONS COLLECTIVE

UNCLAS MANILA 001054

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR EAP/EX AND EAP/MTS
STATE PASS USAID

E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: [EAI](#) [SOCI](#) [EAGR](#) [SENV](#) [RP](#)
SUBJECT: Typhoon Season gets an Early Start

¶1. Summary. Two typhoons have already raked the Philippines and killed 74 people. Typhoon Dante (international name Kujira) swept through on May 3, killed 24 people, and damaged about \$26 million worth of property and infrastructure. Typhoon Emong (international name Chan-Hom) hit landfall May 7, resulting in 50 fatalities and \$14 million in damage. The Philippines has not requested U.S. assistance for either event, but is bracing itself for a longer-than-normal season, since the first damaging typhoon usually does not hit until June. End summary.

¶2. The Philippines averages 20 typhoons from June to November each year. Typhoons are the country's most frequent type of disaster, bringing strong winds, flash floods, and mudslides that cause injuries, death, and destruction to property, infrastructure, and agriculture. The Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration tracks storm activity, rates storm strength from 1-4, and warns the public of impending storms. Post works closely with the Philippine National Disaster Coordinating Council and non-governmental organizations in the event of a disaster. Only in cases of extraordinary damage and suffering does the Ambassador initiate her Disaster Assistance Fund. In such cases in the past the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) has provided additional support through its Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance. The U.S. military has also sometimes been in a position to provide valuable and highly valued assistance help.

Typhoon Dante's Early Entrance

¶3. The typhoon season started early this year when Typhoon Dante's winds of between 130 and 160 miles per hour took lives and damaged property on May 3. Twenty four people died due to resulting landslides, drowning, electrocutions, or hypothermia. Eight people were injured and one person remains missing. Around 45,000 families were affected in five provinces of Bicol, and nearly 10,000 families sought shelter in 175 evacuation centers. The Philippine government estimated 1.228 billion pesos (\$26 million) in damages to agriculture, infrastructure, school property, and homes.

Typhoon Emong Follows on Dante's Heels

¶4. Typhoon Emong caused more deaths, but less property damage in the more sparsely populated northeastern provinces in the Philippines after its May 7 entry. The death toll reached 47 with 15 people still missing, in addition to 42 injuries. The typhoon caused an estimated 30 million pesos (\$637,000) in infrastructure damage and 604 million pesos (\$13 million) in other losses. Over 6,000 homes were destroyed. The Philippine government was able to adequately respond to both typhoons and did not request humanitarian assistance for response efforts.

Filipinos Brace Themselves

¶5. March through May are usually the hot dry summer months in the Philippines. Some Filipinos believe that these two early storms are a harbinger of an unusually long and destructive typhoon season.

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